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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between two aspects of higher education: the liberal arts and experiential learning. The thesis is that a combination of the traditional liberal arts objectives with the methods of experiential education can result in a strengthening of liberal education at a time when circumstances severely threaten its existence. Experiential learning has a specific relationship to the liberal arts. Abstract curricula are meaningless to many of today's students unless we provide them with some reason, some motivating factor to appreciate and use the abstraction. This motivation can be a field experience. The college learning experience should simultaneously provide the means of generalizing on one experience to come up with a myriad of experiences, and a conceptual framework for those generalizations. The abstraction provides the individual with a reason to explore an experience, and when the idea and experience are thus observed they both have meaning. Having meaning they will be remembered, used again and again, oriented through their interaction with other ideas and experiences that have been generalized, and will enter the total being of the individual. (Author/PG)

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EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND THE REVITALIZATION OF THE LIBERAL ARTS:

A Working Paper

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Our purpose is to explore the relationship between two aspects of higher education: the liberal arts and experiential learning. On the one hand, we are dealing with that aspect of education which is rooted most in tradition and which is the university's strongest link with the past; and on the other hand, with an educational method which is in some respects a relative latecomer. Our thesis is that a marriage of the traditional liberal arts objectives with the methods of experiential education can result in a strengthening of liberal education at a time when circumstances severely threaten its future.

The Concept of Liberal Arts

For most of the twentieth century the term "liberal arts" has been used to connote the higher learning that most led to the creation of the "educated" person. It has been this part of the curriculum which, in the form of distribution requirements, general requirements, and major, contained the basics of the university's non-vocational program. When combined with a major, which presumably would prepare the student for a career, the liberal arts requirements were to contribute to the totality of the educated person.

The goals of the liberal arts curriculum remain about the same today, despite efforts in recent years at refurbishment through name changes, and the validity of these goals continues. Basically, the liberal arts provide a means for the individual to understand his or her relationship to the larger environment. The tools for this understanding traditionally have been considered

to be a knowledge of the heritage of western and/or eastern civilization, an exposure to the nature of man and the nature of historical and social forces, and the ability to analyze information independently and with the broadest possible vision. In essence, the goal is to help individuals control events, or failing this, to understand rather than being influenced by the whim of circumstances and movements which toss the individual like straw in the wind, never understanding, from place to place. In this context, history, literature, and philosophy are to give the student the knowledge of his heritage and human nature which should be helpful in predicting the future of human activity. The sciences and the languages provide experience in the rigor of intellectual discipline and the nature of logical thought. The social sciences fill the need for systematic analyses and the testing of hypotheses on the nature of group process and actions, both for understanding self and understanding others. And the arts provide awareness of and sensitivity toward the expressiveness of individuals subject to the storms of society, and understanding of the inter-relatedness of beauty and functionalism, and, some would contend, form the cathedral of higher learning where man's ultimate achievement may be observed.

In sum, the liberal arts have sought to awaken the intelligence of man and open the doors of self-awareness, and to create within man the ability for self-renewal through self-awareness and self-education. The lack of relationship between the liberal arts and vocations and careers has been typified by John Stuart Mill's statement that "men are men before they are lawyers or

physicians, or manufacturers; and if you make them capable and sensible men they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers or physicians."[1]

But despite the esotericism and soliditude of everyday scholarly endeavor, the goals of liberal education have never been divorced from the goals of society. It has always been assumed both explicitly and implicitly, for example, that the breadth of vision, the perspective, and the tools of analysis and reflection are needed by those people whose obligation it is to attack society's problems. Hence, in the sixties, when political forces polarized universities around the question of how far their commitment to the world outside academia should extend, the claim that academics should not take sides, should not become involved, was not consistent with the broader supportive rhetoric of higher education. Sidney Hook, who has spoken strongly for what some would call the most traditional of higher learning, makes a strong plea for the use of creative intelligence inspired by the humanities to perform the primary function of "taming power." As for utility, he contends "the [educational institutions] must teach not merely the facts, but how to test them, how to relate them to problems, and how they bear upon relevant alternatives."[2]

But this vision of "liberal arts" has reached a state of "crisis" in the last few years. This crisis may have been perceived only by those within the system, and may in many cases be

expressed as crises of personal identity, but it is a crisis nonetheless. At least five circumstances can be identified to explain this malaise: the so-called "new vocationalism" and its relationship to a highly technological society;[3] the influx of new learners with new needs into an old system; the ethical dilemma posed for the nation by political events surrounding the Watergate miasma; the growth of the management and accountability movements in higher education; and the confusion of identity and purpose among liberal arts faculty themselves.

Increased Vocationalism

There has been much written lately about the so-called "new vocationalism." Despite the difficulties some commentators have had in identifying the problem, there seems to be little doubt that today's students are more concerned with identifying and training themselves for satisfying careers than was the case in the 1960's. This trend can be seen in the general thrust of federally sponsored commission reports and of federal programs based on such concepts as career education. It is also reflected in student attitudes and choices of academic majors, which show that students are turning away from the more "esoteric" academic fields and toward those which are more marketable in a tight economy.

This shift in national policy and consumer attitude finds its expression in such starkly utilitarian pronouncements as one official's that "if learning cannot be useful, then it is not learning,"[4]

and in such critiques of the liberal arts as Marvin Feldman's in the Conference Board Record:

> Our reverence for "liberal arts" is rooted in myth. It is graduates of technical or vocational colleges who create the options that make our society civilized. Without them life would be ugly, empty, and drab.
>
> Without artisans, the concept of liberal arts is sterile and vapid. We are often told that liberal arts serve to liberate the artisan from the necessary narrowness of his special skill. But it is also true that the liberal arts need the nourishment of practical expression, and thus the practical arts are the basis of liberal values.[5]

Kingman Brewster's analysis and response to the growth of vocationalism is particularly insightful:

> There is an almost frightening avalanche towards law schools and medical schools. And the country doesn't have that many good law schools and medical schools. So that, this is a kind of bottleneck, which does mean that college, instead of being a place to discover yourself, and to take some exploratory trips in fields of knowledge that may not be related to your career, now is kind of pre-professional, and slightly grim in its professionalism, because of this bottleneck into law schools and medical schools.
>
> And that bothers me because I think a general education, a liberal education, is still the best way to develop between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two. And it would be too bad if that were squeezed into a professional groove of some kind.[6]

Although we will explore this phenomenon in more detail below, the colleges and universities with the strongest commitment to liberal arts education have not yet responded creatively to this development. As President Landrum Bolling of Earlham College has said, liberal arts colleges have not yet "come to grips with the dilemma between abstract knowledge and vocational competence."[7]

Attuned to jumping to market demands, the institutional reaction has been either total conversion to vocational programs (made more easy by the dropping of general studies requirements in the 60's) or an ostrich-like rejection of the whole concept. Few seem to have developed institutional responses based on the premise that vocationalism and the education of the whole man, creatively blended, are not necessarily incompatible.

The "New Learners"

Education in the liberal arts has also been affected by expanding enrollment since the early 60's and by the resulting change in the nature of the college undergraduate population. It is one matter for the President of an Ivy League school to speak fondly of the humanizing objectives of the college experience, to a group of students attuned by their social backgrounds to the value of learning. It is quite another matter when the subject is addressed in the open admissions university of the 70's with a student body composed of new learners, minority students, older students, and lower income students, unaccustomed to these traditions. To the new student a degree means a job and increased income; practical and career-related courses are most important. Although, at least to us, it is beyond dispute that the humanities remain important, it is also obvious that new motivations are necessary to encourage those students to pursue these subjects.

Ethics in Public Life

A less tangible impact on the liberal arts, but perhaps the most distressing one, has come as a result of the ethical questions posed by the Watergate Hearings and the continuing publicity

surrounding the impeachment proceedings and trials. The nationally televised proceedings, which featured successful young men discussing the impact of their educations, probably created an uneasiness among many academics about the nature of their ethical obligation. Political commentators were quick to point out this situation. Tom Braden, for example, in a nationally syndicated column entitled "What was wrong with their education?" mentioned the obvious doubts that legal educators were experiencing, but went on to emphasize the need for undergraduate education to consider "right" and "wrong" behavior. "But by the time anybody enters law school, he ought to have had some acquaintance with moral questions. In four years of undergraduate study, some professor, some course, some reading should cause him to ask himself whether a thing is right rather than whether a thing can be done."[8]

While it would be absurd for academicians to assume that they are totally responsible for the sins of their students, or that they are accountable for the ethical behavior of all college graduates, many professors nevertheless feel that one of their jobs is, indeed, to profess. Despite protestations that higher education should not teach a particular set of values, academicians have maintained that the liberal arts, by training the student to analyze problems on the basis of solid information and public need, backed by a knowledge of the history and nature of past fiascos, would come to the right ethical decisions. In other words, the academy by and large holds that no one set of values should be advocated by the liberal arts curriculum, but it is at the same time committed to creating persons who will make the "right" decisions.

This seems an uneasy resolution to the profound question whether higher education should or should not--perhaps we should say "can or cannot"--be value-free. This is an ancient dilemma, but it is brought more sharply into focus in our times, largely because of events in public life.

New Forms of Management and Accountability

Moreover, the liberal arts are being buffeted from within and without academia by the new forms of management accountability. The drive for greater efficiency in the use of scarce resources has created what Earl Cheit calls the "management movement" in higher education. Elaborate models are now available for the analysis of faculty activity, the measurement of productivity, the attainment of carefully specified management objectives, the impact of resources on curricular change, and the flow of students and faculty through institutions, to name only a few. Such management devices, once found only among business corporations and some government agencies, are increasingly being adopted by planners and managers of educational institutions searching for means to adapt internally to the new "steady state" of the seventies.

This movement is encouraged in no small degree by pressures from vital elements in the external environment: parents, taxpayers, donors, higher education coordinating boards and systems offices, and legislators. All seek answers to the central question: Are we getting our money's worth from higher education? The question will no doubt become sharper as inflation continues through the decade.

When the "money's worth" question is turned on the liberal

arts, the answers are not easily forthcoming. What, for example, are the measureable outcomes of a liberal education? What can be cited as evidence of value obtained (either by society or the individual) which will make liberal education compete well in the minds of legislators who must divide the education dollar between professional programs and liberal arts disciplines? What compentencies can be promised from a study of the Aeneid which compare well with those promised studies of human anatomy, soil science, or constitutional law. What have the humanities to offer which pays off in knowable, countable, consumable, or spendable units? These questions are raised here not to imply that there are no answers, but to say that the answers are difficult.

Moreover, to the extent that questions of measurement of output, or accountability generally, are being addressed, they are being worked on by and large not by those closest to the subject matter disciplines, but by the accountants themselves and their technicians. Clearly it is a time when advocates and purveyors of the liberal arts should be raising their own issues about learning objectives and desired impacts, rejecting the notion that discussion of the aims of education in our time can only lead to stale platitudes. The alternative is to leave to business-minded managers and accountants inside and outside the institutions the task of redefining the uses of the liberal arts, through such "practical" measures as the rate of successful entry in the job market.

Confusion of Purpose

Irving Kristol has recently observed that "the question of the

relevance of the humanities to young people only arises today because so many professors of humanities don't really believe in them. They don't believe they are teaching important or even the most important things."[9]

We have said already that there is an identity dilemma among liberal arts faculty. This kind of confusion of purpose makes its own contribution to the crisis of the liberal arts. Not only is there a question in the minds of some faculty about whether the value of ethics and values themselves is sufficiently demonstrated, accepted, and capable of being taught and learned. The question whether the humanities, for example, should be value-free, may have arisen naturally in response to the radical challenge of values on which it was assumed there was wide consensus. Not only have there been "radical" challenges, but ethnic and nationality and sexual challenges to assumed values as well. A retreat to the supposedly high ground of ethical neutrality is a normal response to value confrontation. It does, however, leave us with the question of what is left that is humane about the humanities and what is liberal about the liberal arts.

To this dilemma we can add a certain amount of anxiety and confusion with which some faculty must react to the threat of enrollment declines. To the extent that faculty questions go beyond personal job security, they probably encompass concerns about the adequacy of purpose and method in teaching the liberal arts. A few may choose to weave a cocoon out of the status quo, hoping that the current bad market conditions will eventually go away; most faculty, we would imagine, are wondering whether they have been

doing the right thing, and wondering what, indeed, that "right thing" is.

These self-doubts among faculty members who should be the key advocates and interpreters of liberal education are summed up in Charles Hitchcock's observation that "There is a widespread conviction in the universities that liberal arts education has failed and needs to make way for something else, whatever that might be."[10]

Whether the liberal arts will survive intact in their present form is not at question, for they almost certainly will not. The pressures for accountability and evidence of improved management are more likely to grow than diminish. Unless the thrust of federal policy in the direction of career education subsides, and unless students and parents return to an unquestioning faith in the nonvocational values of higher education, there will continue to be unrelenting demands on the liberal arts to "make learning useful." To the extent that "new learners" are responsible for the shift toward a career-oriented clientele, that orientation is likely to grow rather than weaken as we make progress toward equality of access to higher education. And last, the current anxieties and dilemmas of identity and ideology among liberal arts faculty do not seem likely to undergo spontaneous remission. These circumstances are enough to define the situation of the liberal arts as problematic; what defines it as a crisis is the fact that at the very time the liberal arts are weak and disoriented, the consequences of living in a virtually non-ethical society are coming clear, particularly in our public life.

Modes of Teaching and Learning in the Liberal Arts

Turning from the concept of liberal arts education and consideration of its current traumas to the teaching of the liberal arts will lead us to a consideration of the potential role of experiential education in the learning process.

The lecture, of course, continues to be the device most often used to reach undergraduates in the arts and sciences, based partly on the proposition that a person of learning can convey knowledge orally in large doses and that students will retain it. A somewhat more personal and dynamic approach is the seminar or discussion section; with an increase in readings and papers and interaction with the knowledgeable faculty member. Both rest on the basic premise that the student's mind is a willing receptable for information, which will then be turned by hard work (study) into genuine learning and understanding.

A step closer to the concept of student involvement in the teaching-learning process is the independent study project, which is sometimes used to academically structure field research but most often involves library research done at the student's initiative. In the sciences, the laboratory is in some ways comparable to independent study, and is designed to confront the learner directly with the research material.

The student may spend more time outside the classroom in the social sciences, where a period of observation, in some cases field trips, is widely used, Still under close supervision, the observation of a policy making board or social worker in action, for example, is expected to help the student relate to the "real" material, i.e.,

that which is presented in the classroom. In other areas, such as geology, forestry, anthropology, and archaeology, the laboratory is actually someplace in the field, as might be the case in foreign travel for language students.

What is represented in these examples of settings for teaching and learning appears to be a kind of continuum involving such dimensions as:

1. dependence on use of the classroom
2. dependence on oral transmission of information
3. dependence on instructor as knowledge source
4. dependence on student as generator of integrative principles
5. degree of opportunity for application of theory to practice, abstract to concrete, general to particular
6. need to assume student motivation and self-direction for effective learning[11]

As we define experiential education, it would come at one end of this continuum of teaching devices. The student in the experiential learning situation would ideally be expected to spend fairly large amounts of time on a regular basis outside the classroom. The location of the work, whether a formalized institution or less structured situation, should permit the student to become an integral part of the institution or learning environment, hopefully performing real work with real value in a manner similar to other non-student participants in that environment. This immersion is important because simple observation, that is, from the periphery of the environment, might not be enough to help the learner understand the inner or hidden meanings, the cues, which reflect real versus superficial activity.

In this learning environment, the learner is expected to apply the same intense analysis and reflection demanded by other learning approaches. (It is important that academic credit is not given for the work or activity but rather for the reflection upon it). It is here that the student's relationship with the faculty person is crucial. For it is through the interjection of outside stimuli, in the form of conversation with the instructor, reading, and the integration of both in verbalized reflection, that the learner sees how action and reflection are combined in the total intellectual process. In some cases, this process may be extended over a long period of time, with intense structured preparation for the field work (pre-seminars) and follow up. Or the preparation and reflection may be integrated into the same time span. No matter what the method, the goal is the integration of facts, ideas, and experience into a synthesis of understanding.

Experiential Education and Liberal Arts

Rather than further defining experiential education in general terms, it should be more fruitful to explore it in depth by examining its specific relationships to the liberal arts.

At the outset we should deal with a commonly held assumption; that experiential learning, internships, practia, etc. are basically professional or vocational. There is, of course, no doubt that there are career advantages in experiential situations. In some fields, for example, medicine, education, and social work to name more obvious instances, it is a pedagogical truism that field experience is an integral part of training. There is also little doubt that the internship, when employed by any student, provides

both the opportunity for career exploration by the student and provides a potential employer with the opportunity to recruit an employee. In addition, several disciplines, including some in the humanities, are beginning to realize that the student with a real work situation on their resume ("assistant to legislator," "public relations specialist," "management intern") is more competitive in a tight job market. As a college degree becomes more and more commonplace, these advantages are no doubt important to students entering the labor market. But it is our assumption that career advantages alone do not support, or in some cases justify, experiential learning as a component of a student's general studies or liberal arts curriculum.

On the contrary, what does justify experiential learning is its relationship to the reflective objectives of higher education.

We suggest, for example, that one of the goals of the humanities curriculum is to help the student understand the nature of man and his environment through the study of history, literature and philosophy. At the same time, instructors in these fields must have all wondered whether their students, who may have little concern for the disciplinary methodology which beclouds the presentation of this general understanding, or who may have little aesthetic appreciation or sense of identity with past personalities, are learning materials by rote for the purpose of passing examinations and never reflecting on the broader nature of that material.

For several years, for example, one of the writers has tried to interest American History students in southern politics through the reading of T. Harry Williams' biography of Huey Long. As a

teaching tool, the book was a disaster, partly because its length (over 900 pages) and detail were oppressive to most students because of their limited prior understanding of both politics and the relationship between politics and administrative manipulation. Quite logically, they questioned why they needed to read 900 pages to get the "information" they thought the book contained; the "understanding" the book could have led them to was simply unavailable to all but a few.

The pedagogical breakthrough occurred with the development of seminars for full-time undergraduate interns in state government settings. All the interns were located in situations where they did real work for administrators of government agencies which related directly to the Governor. The interns were aware, in a routine fashion, of the implications of practical gubernatorial power through their internship assignment, not their seminar. When the seminar reached the point of reflecting on the role of the contemporary Governor, Huey Long was assigned. The book took on fantastic new relevance and meaning for the students. They could immediately identify both with Huey Long and his administrative environment. "My agency would have reacted differently in that situation!"; "The Governor pulled that maneuver on our department" were their reactions, indications that the information had a peg on which to hang in the memory of each student. Moreover, the wealth of detail and analysis in the book, formerly a hindrance, now became an advantage; a thorough written analysis of the milieu of one Governor and one state political administrative structure, in the context of practical experience, brought understanding.

The interns, therefore, each had a personal experience with historical understanding; they placed themselves and their environment in the context of historical experience. And this was not, we should note, a matter of their relating theory to reality. As a further extension of this phenomenon, they realized that this book, history, was in fact reality; historical consciousness came upon them in the sense that Huey Long was as real as their current governor, the only difference was that they read about one and observed the other personally.

This small anecdotal example draws us toward a larger question. According to Ralph Tyler, a dean of American educational theorists, the belief that "abstraction" as a mental process comes before "application" is a middle class concept related to social class or employment differences; historically all persons were to be taught abstractions, despite intellectual differences, in the mode of training professionals. He argues that the notion is faulty, especially when applied to persons whose socio-economic background is not middle class but oriented toward pragmatic vocationalism. (Our experience suggests that the middle class have difficulties as well.) This suggests that we will not reach the "new" college student with our standard approach, if, indeed we are now reaching the "old!" Abstract curricula are meaningless to many of today's students unless we provide them with some "reason," some motivating factor, to appreciate and use the abstraction. This motivation can be a field experience.

But experience can be chaotic and meaningless unless the mind puts it into meaningful order. Therefore, in the case of theeexample above, the reading (Huey Long), which caused reflection on the

individual's experience added the "order" of historical context. The college learning experience should simultaneously provide the means of generalizing upon one experience tc come up with a myriad of experiences, and a conceptual framework for those generalizations. Another way of stating this is that the idea, the abstraction, provides the individual with a reason to explore an experience, and when the idea and experience are thus observed they both have meaning. Having meaning they will be remembered, used again and again, oriented through their interaction with other ideas and experiences which have been generalized, and will enter the total being of the individual.

We have argued above that an experience becomes more meaningful when combined with abstraction. In experiential learning situations, the reverse can just as easily be the case. In this case, the abstraction (the theory, the generality) can be tested in a non-theoretical environment, its validity can be assessed in a concrete instance, its extension to this particularity examined, and the practical applications determined. One would hope further that when merged with experience the theory will also be better remembered and used in the future.

It is one thing, for example, to read in Weber of the distinction between charismatic and rational-legal authority and quite another to see as an intern the exercise of leadership in the rule-bound process of law-making in a legislature. In fact, it is one thing to read about the application of Weberian ideal types generally to reality and quite another to attempt that application oneself. While Kant's observation that nothing is more practical than a

good theory cannot be argued against, it can also be said that nothing reinforces a good theory and cements it to mind like a living application of it. The best teachers, from Socrates and Christ to the present, have understood this principle and have imported their applications into their "classrooms" as analogy, illustration, parable, case study, and simulation, all of which are techniques only one step away from using live experience as the "casebook." As Paul Freund says about teaching about abstractions such as values in context,"... They become part of a whole, to be apprehended kinesthetically, as you learn to play a composition on the piano. In context - not by dogmatic repitition but by working through problems with values in mind."[12]

The field experience designed to relate theory to practice has its risks and pitfalls, of course. Chief among them is that the theory, which may be sound, is completely thrown out by the student because the "real world" in some particular instances does not confirm it. The marketplace, in other words, does not guarantee the purchase of a high-quality academic abstraction. Colleges of architecture, for an example, are attempting to create in their students an appreciation for the total environment of man in his created landscape, as well as a sensitivity toward the long-term aesthetic needs of mankind. When, however, this appreciation and sensitivity are tested in the real world, economic, political, and social factors may demand that architectural firms set such considerations aside in favor of plans which contribute toward further pollution of the man-made landscape. One suspects, furthermore, that in schools with cooperative education programs

for architects the student sometimes returns to the campus determined to challenge the validity of the abstraction and to demand that functionalism and profit be the foremost ingredients in the academic program. What is to prevent students from returning to the academic cloister with disillusionment, cynicism, and exclusive regard for the world of "practical affairs" when they test theories of peace against the facts of war, theories of democracy against the facts of unequal distribution of power in public life, theories of economic development in a world of cutthroat international rivalry, theories of truth in a world of propaganda, theories of justice in a world of injustice?

There is no reassuring answer to such a question, but it must be pointed out that the same dangers exist when students leave the college or university after four years, degrees in hand, to confront those same social, economic and political realities. Because these students will never return, there is no way to reinforce (or restore) their faith in the original concepts and principles. We suggest, therefore, that from the educator's point of view, it may be more advisable to have the theory tested under supervised field conditions, in which the instructor and the student can rebuild and/or defend, refurbish it, than to have the theory destroyed forever as a result of one bout with a hostile non-theoretical situation.

There are other relationships between experiential learning and the liberal arts. One of these concerns the purposes related to moral choice, ethical decision, and citizenship in a participatory system. Sidney Hook, for example, maintains that choices among alternatives, all of which may be somewhat unattractive, is the

constant dilemma of man. He argues as follows:

> "As I understand the philosophical bequest of the humanities to the modern world, it reinforces our awareness of the indispensibility of human choice in every moral situation, and the dignity of human choice as constituting the glory and tragedy of man. Indeed, the operating effectiveness of human choice is what we mean by freedom. In the end, power can be tamed, if at all, by the human spirit which alone is the carrier of cosmic value, and by the use of intelligence in the service of human freedom."[13]

Hook further argues that the responsibility of educated intelligence demands analyzing the information coming to the individual, and perhaps swaying him by "sophisms, propaganda and brass bands." "And it is precisely here that the educational agencies of a democracy have an enormous responsibility. They must teach not merely the facts, but how to test them, how to relate them to problems, and how they bear upon relevant alternatives. They must also stir imagination and sensibility in envisaging the effects of proposed modes of conduct on the human situation." The same argument was put as a truism by Whitney Griswold. "The liberal arts inform and enlighten the independent citizens of a democracy in the use of their own resources."[14]

Of course neither Hook nor Griswold is arguing for the use of experiential learning. In fact, that they would both theoretically hold to traditional classroom instruction, and that Hook has opposed some current educational innovations, makes their thoughts doubly useful here. For it is our contention that the moral choice, the relationship of intelligence to problems and to the impact on people, and the ethical virtue Hook ascribes to the humanities, are those which Americans currently feel are both unrepresented in our college programs.

This may be, we suggest, because of inadequate pedagogy used to relay these virtues. In essence, the making of intelligent choices cannot be learned in a vacuum, for no decisions are made in the context of an ideal value oriented environment. Decisions, the determination of and solution of problems, are made in the context of dynamics influencing the individual in the most graphic and personal ways. Decisions have potential for negative impact on home, family, career and life itself. Of course, it is the academic hope that the "context" will be provided by the understanding gained through the humanities and sciences; these will provide the framework for taking in experience and deciding upon it. But, as we have seen dramatically, there is no guarantee that the abstract context will hold up, or that it will be remembered, or that the intellectual value orientation will not be thrown out in total at first confrontation with hostile circumstances. We therefore return to our earlier argument: that the integrated context of learning and experience may provide not only the means of remembering the learned abstractions, but also a way of reinforcing them after and during the time in which they are being tested by the hostile condition. We contend further that the values Hook advocates fall largely into the areas of appreciation and sensitivity, which cannot be adequately tested for or determined to be at work in the mind of the undergraduate learner as he sits through a lecture on Plato or the abuse of power. They may be tested, however, outside the classroom, in a supervised experiential situation in which the learner forces a personal confrontation between his values and decisions (an intellectual and internal confrontation), assesses the results

and returns intellectually to the abstraction either for new insights, reinforcement, or to modify the abstraction so as not to change its essence but to see how he can work within its general limitations yet make the hard choice.

We also suggest, based on Hook's position that the point of education is to be able to understand the relationship between ideas and problems and their impact on man, that these relationsips cannot be questioned through traditional teaching. Despite the importance of historical awareness, we have seen that the new learner, without inherent attraction to abstraction may have to be confronted by the problem before the abstraction becomes germane and can be used to make the decision. Therefore, a field experience, where the problem is explored in a controlled but real environment, should be preferable to the same person making the same choice ten years later as a Presidential assistant.

Liberal Skills and the Technological Society

In discussing the nature of the liberal arts earlier, we made mention of the necessity for controlling technological as well as political power. One of the central challenges is in discovering new methods for the training of technicians and professionals--and even ordinary educated citizens--which do not produce "minds in a groove," to use Whitehead's phrase. A demanding economic environment and the historical development of a technocratic society have forced the realization that skills as well as concepts and perspectives must be produced by the educational process. Higher education in the 1970's appears to face a choice between abandoning the liberal arts curriculum in favor of vocationalism, or reaffirming

the liberal arts in hopes of interrupting the ascendent curve of "blind" technology.

But perhaps the choice is not so extreme as put here. It should be interesting to explore the possibility of developing "liberal skills" in addition to the "liberal knowledge" which dominates current curricula. (In fact, "liberal skills" are really what Sidney Hook, for example, has been advocating.) These skills, it may turn out, are best approached through non-traditional means. such as field experience.

Let us dwell for a moment longer on the notion of liberal skills. A case can be made, we believe, for the proposition that although the traditional concepts of liberal education hold validity for our time, these "classical" concepts require reinterpretation, recasting, and perhaps a new vocabulary in order to address contemporary needs and understandings. We might profitably ask ourselves what competencies are likely to be required of educated persons approaching the last quarter of this century. The answers will vary according to the ways individuals read the near future. One set of answers is suggested by H. Bradley Sagen in his provocative discussion of the "professional model of undergraduate education."[15]

Sagen argues that while it remains true that knowledge is a proper end in itself, educators must understand that there are proper uses to which systematic knowledge can be put, and that adding the "practice" component to "pure" knowledge, as in the professions, is a key to revitalizing undergraduate education.

He observes that "if we continue to teach only the scholar's conception of knowledge to undergraduates and fail to convey the importance of perspective and consequences, we may well also fail to control complex technologies and social systems.[16]

Among the "task-oriented competencies" which Sagen argues should be sought through undergraduate education are these:

1. "Professional" problem-solving; that is, coping with "the kind of problem for which the solution does not begin with a review of the literature." Application to "real" problems will require multi-disciplinary approaches, dealing with conflicting values, working under the pressure of time with inadequate resources and information, and so on.

2. Organizational and interpersonal skills of the kind needed to cope with corporate, governmental, and urban settings in which most of us will spend our lives. Component skills in this area would include leadership training, empathic skills, and self-developmental competencies.

3. A related skill is "the ability to interpret complex information to those less well educated," or, in other words, learning how to teach others.

4. Other skills mentioned include decision-making, dealing with large quantities of complex information (for example, by use of the computer), the process of design, and legal reasoning.

Sagen does not intend that his list of competencies be taken as fully developed; each of us would offer our revisions, additions, and perhaps deletions.[17] But this list does serve to illustrate a basic point: that we are capable of making guesses about what skills will be required to face the future as educated persons. These skills, it seems obvious to us, are anything but alien to the time-honored and still-valid aims of liberal education we hug most warmly, without the achievement of which, in Sagen's words, "the result will be first, a nation of technicians who lack the capacity to predict the potential implications of their actions;

and second, a nation of citizens and leaders who lack the wisdom to judge wisely the proposals of technicians."[18]

Sagen's treatment underscores, furthermore, what we and others have suggested about more effective learning of such skills: that the liberal arts might learn something from professional education in the latter's greater emphasis on learning through the application of knowledge to practice.[19]

Shelton Williams, in describing the policy research field program at Austin College, points out this merger of skills and knowledge by explaining that the program is to "assist students in applying techniques acquired in liberal arts education to the study of contemporary social issues. These techniques include not only modern research skills but the analysis of the ethical bases on which policy is or should be based."[20] Daniel Bell explains the process in broader terms, emphasizing the need to "uncover the underlying intellectual structure in which one's work is embedded." He adds, "In this way, the context of specialism can be enlarged, and becomes an aspect of the liberal education itself."[21]

Some Thoughts Toward Implemention

Thus far we have generalized about the liberal arts and experiential learning. A few examples of the possible ways such experiences might be incorporated into the curriculum are now appropriate. The examples are presented with certain disclaimers. First, we are assuming that certain important advantages of field experience are sufficiently obvious that they do not need elaboration here. These advantages might include help in career choice for the students, financial assistance, a "sense" of the real world, or a commitment

to service. Secondly, because most readers will be familiar with such instances of "out-of-class" teaching and learning as government intern programs, intern placements in business or architectual firms, and independent field study, we will turn our attention to less ordinary examples. Finally, it should be clear that these are illustrative examples, not proposals, and that the list is by no means comprehensive.

One possibility for tying a modest amount of field experience into a program such as English might be to relate a field experience directly to the content of a specific area of literature. This might require some course restructuring, but today it is not uncommon to structure upper level courses by social characteristics of the literatire. As one example, we might work with a course entitled, "Social Literature of the 20th Century." The reading list in this course might include The Jungle, The Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row, and several of Richard Wright's novels, among others.

The objectives of such a course, in keeping with the aims of the humanities generally, would be to use the insights of the best writers in this area of literature to illuminate real human problems in the present, and vice versa, to illuminate the insightfulness of certain writers through confrontation with actual human problems.

One plan might be to extend this course over two semesters. During the first semester the student would work in a setting similar to that of the subject matter of the literature; a migrant labor camp or an agency serving migrants, or in a laboring situation, or in an inner city situation similar to most of Wright's books.

The student would, of course, be expected to do more than observe behavior in these environments and therefore would have to spend a considerable amount of time in them - perhaps a minimum of 20 hours per week.

Credit in this case would be developed not for the field experience itself, but for the total experience. The student would enroll, for example, for nine hours of credit for the total package, and might complete part of a reading list while working 20 hours per week in the fall term, and would move in the spring semester into a seminar on the same subject with more reading and papers. A diary or log kept during the work experience might also be the subject of considerable discussion in the seminar.

The same model might apply to students in courses in recent political history courses. In this case students might be placed in a political campaign, with a lobby group, or a labor union, or in a bureaucratic structure. The student's responsibilities might be more related to research for the sponsoring agency, especially if the internship had to be carried out on a part-time basis. The related seminar in this case would be an effort to reflect on the specific machinations of the placement environment as they were reflected in historical data.

The academic emphasis would be on comparison and generalization. Not designed to impute specific historical information, the total process (field placement and seminar) would be designed to help the student "read" his environment in its historical context. An alternative model appropriate for English or history might be field research of an oral history or oral data collection nature. Such

a project could be tied to the specific research interests of the instructor. This approach has been used widely enough and discussed enough not to need extensive discussion in this paper.

The above examples propose modest programs of field work. A more substantial amount might be included in a field based course which would investigate the ethical basis of decision making in business or government. This course might be scheduled as a full time field involvement for all or part of a semester and would be interdisiplinary. Students would be placed with persons in positions of management or supervisory authority. These executive supervisors would be carefully selected and told of the nature of the assignment in advance and could even be defined as a community-based "field faculty." The students would also participate in an intensive seminar, with a teaching staff comprised of an experienced business or government executive, a professor of philosophy, and a professor of administration. The student's specific academic assignment would be to identify and analyze a number of critical incidents where decisions were made and test that analysis in the seminar setting. This specific program would, of course, be broader than it might seem (i.e., not just meaningful in terms of "ethical considerations") in that the student would be constructively contributing to the sponsor with real work and therefore would be getting a practical experience, he would be examining the organization in terms of its total structure, and he would be developing skills of analysis more akin to those practiced in everyday life.

A much-discussed but little-used field experience approach for

the liberal arts might be a policy research institute staffed by students under faculty srpervision, such as the Austin College program mentioned earlier. In this example a team of faculty members would supervise a task force of students in a contract relationsnip with a public agency. The contract would call for a thorough analysis of the applicability of a particular policy; the subject matter might range from the feasibility and desirability of a proposed highway extension to the legalization of off-track betting (a subject actually researched by the students at Louisville Shawnee High School for the Legislative Research Commission).

The policy research approach could be designed specifically to give students the opportunity to delve deeply into the technical ramifications of planning, surveying and forcasting. It could also give the students the opportunity to formulate with some hope of implementation their own rationale for the ethical base on which decisions affecting the entire community could be made. The model has the further advantage of not being tied to a specific place (i.e., office space in an agency) in that research could be conducted in the community and reflection exercised in the classroom. An obvious disadvantage might be the unpredictability (from semester to semester) of community needs for policy research projects.

Although these are modest sketches, they do point out the range of particular field experience applications in the liberal arts. To repeat, there are numerous experiences already in existence or placements available for individual students which would also be of use in liberal arts areas. These include not only the established government intern programs, but opportunities in field

research and practical writing to work with archives.

The main point, however, is that the field experience could be useful in the liberal arts; that it has not yet been exploited, and that the range of options are as wide as geography and the imagination will permit.

Conclusion

We have tried to show in this paper that while the aims of education in the liberal arts retain their validity, their vitality is threatened critically by forms of anemia and environmental threat peculiar to our times, and that one means for seeking their revitilization lies in the use of that family of devices for teaching and learning which we have called "experiential education." Exclusive concern with experiential education in this paper should not be taken as evidence of naive preoccupation on our part with narrow pedagogical gimmickery for its own sake. We merely wish to present the case that such devices should be tried in furtherance of traditional liberal arts aims.

We can go no further than to suggest what appears to be a promising direction, and would not dare to guarantee success. So much depends on the quality of imagination, the willingness of faculty members to work through the problems of concept and execution, the adminsitrative assessments of costs and benefits, and the readiness of students to make the most of such opportunities--to name but the most obvious problems--that one would be foolish to peddle experiential education as the "perfect product." Indeed, the proper training of the intellect, as John Henry Cardinal Newman pointed out in 1852, can be guaranteed by no particular method:

> ... it is not mere application, however exemplary, which introduces the mind to truth, nor the reading of many books, nor the getting up of many subjects, nor the witnessing many experiments, nor the attending many lectures. All this is short of enough; a man may have done it all, yet be lingering in the vestibule of knowledge...[22]

The objective for all of us, we trust, is to get beyond the vestibule of knowledge, by whatever means.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Quoted in Alfred Whitney Griswold, Essays on Education, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954; p. 150.

[2]Sidney Hook, Education and the Taming of Power, La Salle: Open Court Press, 1973, p.30.

[3]This phrase is taken from Charles Hitchcock's excellent, "The New Vocationalism," Change, April 1973. Also see John B. Stephenson, "Efficiency and Vocationalism - Renewed Threats to Liberal Education," forthcoming in Liberal Education, October, 1974.

[4]This statement was actually an attempt by Sidney Marland to use Whitehead's quote in support of career education. The source is an Office of Education film entitled "Career Education" (Maryland State Board of Education, through Olympus Research Corp., n.d.).

[5]Marvin J. Feldman, "The Relevance Gap in American Education," The Conference Board Record, June 1972.

[6]The Reasoner Report, March 23, 1974, ABC News.

[7]Bolling's comment, made in 1973, was referred to in the Louisville Courier-Journal, July 8, 1974.

[8]Louisville Courier-Journal, April 17, 1974.

[9]In "Values in Contemporary Society," a conference held by The Rockefeller Foundation, March 1974, Typescript, p. 21.

[10]Hitchcock, "The New Vocationalism," op. cit.

[11]Ideas relating to this continuum of learning are discussed in Daniel S. Arnold, "Differentiating Concepts of Experiential Learning," contained in John B. Stephenson, et al., "Experiential Education: A New Direction for an Old Concept," ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education Document Number ED 086079. These papers were initially presented at the 81st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Montreal, August 1973.

[12] "Values in Contemporary Society," op. cit.

[13] Hook, op. cit., p. 200.

[14] Griswold, op. cit., p.7.

[15] H. Bradley Sagen, "The Professions: A Neglected Model for Undergraduate Education," presented at AAHE Regional Conferences, 1972-73.

[16] Ibid., p. 2.

[17] In fairness to Sagen, we have taken the liberty of reordering his treatment of competencies.

[18] Ibid., p.9.

[19] Robert Nisbet also seems to support the general view that the liberal arts may be requvenated by joining with the professional education in new ways. See his recent statement that "The prosperity of the liberal arts will be far greater if they are woven into those professional fields central to the university's history, rather than being treated as they now so commonly are as a kind of museum of interesting exhibits which one should pass through on his way to chosen interest," in Change, Summer 1974, p. 30.

[20] Shelton L. Williams, "Policy Research in Undergraduate Learning," Journal of Higher Education, April 1974, pp. 296-304.

[21] Daniel Bell, The Reforming of General Education, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 286-87.

[22] John Henry Cardinal Newman, The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated, London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1910, pp. 151-52.